

E.F.

With Miss Mason's love

April 1914 H.C.M.C. 499

# THE BASIS OF NATIONAL STRENGTH

MISS CHARLOTTE MASON  
ON KNOWLEDGE  
THE MONTESSORI METHOD

*(Reprinted from "The Times," by permission  
of the Editor)*

ONE SHILLING NET

AMBLESIDE :  
GEORGE MIDDLETON  
THE ST. OSWALD PRESS  
LONDON :  
P.N.E.U. OFFICE, 26, VICTORIA STREET  
1913



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## PREFACE

Because, "The consequence of Truth is great, therefore the judgment of it must not be negligent:" (*Wichcote*)

Because education generally is not satisfactory in so far as it does not lead people to read and think, or to form "a right judgment in all things":

Because education is everybody's business:

Because the country deserves of us that we should take careful thought about the education of those who shall come after:—

For these and other reasons may I, as a veteran educationalist, beg consideration of the following argument in defence of *knowledge*, which it seems to me is not duly regarded as the material of education.

A wide and long experience convinces me that any failure is not in the scholars or in the teachers but in the methods employed; and I submit these considerations hopefully and respectfully to the Education Department, to Councils, Inspectors, the Clergy, Teachers, and other persons who have public education at heart.

CHARLOTTE M. MASON.

*Ambleside,  
January, 1913.*



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PREFACE

Because the Montessori system of education is a new one, it is not surprising that it has attracted much attention. The system is based on the principle that the child is a being in his own right, and that he should be allowed to develop his own powers of mind and body. The system is based on the principle that the child is a being in his own right, and that he should be allowed to develop his own powers of mind and body. The system is based on the principle that the child is a being in his own right, and that he should be allowed to develop his own powers of mind and body.

Charlotte H. Mason

London, 1911

CONTENTS

	PAGE
I. ON KNOWLEDGE . . . . .	7
II. LETTERS, KNOWLEDGE, AND VIRTUE . . . . .	13
III. KNOWLEDGE, REASON, AND REBELLION . . . . .	19
IV. NEW AND OLD CONCEPTIONS OF KNOWLEDGE . . . . .	26
V. EDUCATION AND THE FULNESS OF LIFE . . . . .	33
VI. KNOWLEDGE IN LITERARY FORM . . . . .	39
VII. (Supplementary) THE MONTESSORI SYSTEM . . . . .	47



# THE BASIS OF NATIONAL STRENGTH

## I.

### MISS CHARLOTTE MASON ON KNOWLEDGE

TO THE EDITOR OF "THE TIMES"

Sir, — As *The Times*, always awake to the educational interests of the nation, has already given much space to the interesting discussion of (the education of) "The Average Boy," may I call attention to one or two fundamental considerations upon which this question and others seem to me to depend? For if our conceptions of education are heterogeneous and incoherent, naturally, we shall have a tangle of examination schemes evolved to test our ill-conceived work.

Educationally, we are in a bad way. We were told the other day, in *Across the Bridges*, of the rapid deterioration of the bright intelligent responsive schoolboy of the sixth and seventh standards. Why? we ask. The present industrial unrest reveals virtue, even heroism of a sort, in the working man, but a lamentable want of knowledge—lack of education; he appears to have little insight, imagination, or power of reflection. The tendency in his class is that "dangerous tendency which we must all do our best to resist" indicated by Mr. Burns at a public meeting some two or three years ago; "the spirit of the horde, he said, "is being developed; and whether it is in exhibitions, sports, or legislation, the individual is becoming less and less important and the mob more and more so." And again, "the tendency of the present day in all modern movements is for great crowds to be brought together to see other people play; and that is extending not only to play, but to other fields of life." Could the industrial movement of to-day be better diagnosed? Again we ask, Why? As for those young men from public



schools who fail in the Dominions, enough has been said about them; but those other public schoolmen who succeed in a measure at outposts of the Empire because of the virtue that is in them, do they not fail sometimes in an equal measure for lack of the insight, imagination, intelligence, which come of knowledge? For the people who stay at home, "educated" men and women, I write as an old woman who remembers how in the sixties and seventies "countenance" was much talked of; "an intelligent countenance," "a fine countenance," "a noble countenance," were matters of daily comment. The word has dropped out of use; is it because the thing signified has dropped out of existence? Countenance is a manifestation of thought, feeling, intelligence; and it is none of these, but stolid indifference combined with physical well-being, that we read in many faces to-day.

If we have these grounds for discontent, education is no doubt the culprit at the bar. Though there never was, I suppose, a more heroic and devoted body of teachers at work, they get for themselves the greater blessing of those who give; but the children suffer, poor little souls; "poured into like a bucket," they receive without stint, and little comes of it. There is no lack of zeal on the part of the teaching profession, but there is a tendency amongst us to depreciate knowledge and to depreciate our scholars. Now, knowledge is the material of education, as flour is the material of bread; there are substitutes for knowledge, no doubt, as there are for flour. Before the era of free meals I heard of a little girl in East London whose mother gave her a penny, to buy dinner for herself and her little sister, when the two set out for school. The child confided to her teacher that a ha'porth of aniseed drops "stays your stomach" more than a halfpenny bun. Now, our schools are worked more or less upon aniseed drops—marks, prizes, scholarships, blue ribbons, all of which "stay the stomach" of the boy who does not get the knowledge that he needs. That is the point. He needs knowledge as much as he needs bread and milk; his appetite for knowledge is as healthy as his appetite for his dinner; and an abundant regular supply at short intervals of various knowledge is a constitutional necessity for the growing youth as well as for the curious child; and yet we stay his hunger pangs upon "aniseed drops."

We do worse. We say "What is the good of knowledge? Give a boy professional instruction, whether he is to be a barrister or a bricklayer, and strike out from his curriculum Greek or geography, or whatever is not of utilitarian value. Teach him to play the game and handle the ropes of his calling, and you have done the best for him." Now, here is a most mischievous fallacy, an assertion that a child is to be brought up for the uses of society only and not for his own uses. Here we get the answer to the repeated question that suggested itself in a survey of our educational condition. We launch children upon too arid and confined a life. "Studies are for delight," says Bacon, acknowledging that personal delight, joy in living, is a chief object of education; and he only repeats Socrates, who conceived that knowledge is for pleasure, in the sense, not that knowledge is one source, but is the source of pleasure.

It is for their own sakes that children should get knowledge. The power to take a generous view of men and their motives, to see where the greatness of a given character lies, to have one's judgment of present events illustrated and corrected by historic and literary parallels, to have, indeed, the power of comprehensive judgment—these are admirable assets within the power of every one according to the measure of his mind; and these are not the only gains which knowledge affords. The person who can live upon his own intellectual resources and never know a dull hour (though anxious and sad hours will come) is indeed enviable in these days of intellectual inanition, when we depend upon spectacular entertainments *pour passer le temps*.

If knowledge means so much to us, "What is knowledge?" We can give only a negative answer. Knowledge is not instruction, information, scholarship, a well-stored memory. It is passed, like the light of a torch, from mind to mind, and the flame can be kindled at original minds only. Thought, we know, breeds thought; it is as vital thought touches our minds that our ideas are vitalized, and out of our ideas comes our conduct of life. The case for reform hardly needs demonstration, but now we begin to see the way of reform. The direct and immediate impact of great minds upon his own mind is necessary to the education of a child. Most of us can get into touch with original minds chiefly through books; and if we want to know how far a school provides intellectual



sustenance for its scholars, we may ask to see the list of books in reading during the current term. If the list be short, the scholar will not get enough mind-stuff; if the books are not various, his will not be an all-round development; if they are not original, but compiled at second hand, he will find no material in them for his intellectual growth. Again, if they are too easy and too direct, if they tell him straight what he is to think, he will read, but he will not appropriate. Just as a man has to eat a good dinner in order that his physical energies may be stimulated to select and secrete that small portion which is vital to him, so must the intellectual energies be stimulated to extract what the individual needs by a generous supply, and also by a way of presentation that is not obvious. We have the highest authority for the indirect method of teaching proper to literature, and especially to poetry. The parables of Christ remain dark sayings; but what is there more precious in the world's store of knowledge?

How injurious then is our habit of depreciating children; we water their books down and drain them of literary flavour, because we wrongly suppose that children cannot understand what we understand ourselves; what is worse, we explain and we question. A few pedagogic maxims should help us, such as, "Do not explain," "Do not question," "Let one reading of a passage suffice," "Require the pupil to relate the passage he has read." The child must read to know; his teacher's business is to see that he knows. All the acts of generalization, analysis, comparison, judgment, and so on, the mind performs for itself in the act of knowing. If we doubt this, we have only to try the effect of putting ourselves to sleep by relating silently and carefully, say, a chapter of Jane Austen or a chapter of the Bible, read once before going to bed. The degree of insight, the visualization, that comes with this sort of mental exercise is surprising.

A child in his seventh year will relate "The Pilgrim's Progress," chapter by chapter, though he cannot read it, and some half-dozen other books of the best we can find for him. In his eighth and ninth year he works happily with a dozen books at a time, books of history, adventures, travels, poems. From his tenth to his twelfth year he reads considerable books of English and French history, seriously written, Shakespeare's historical plays, North's "Plutarch's Lives," and a dozen other worthy books. As he goes up the school,

his reading becomes wider and more difficult, but every one knows the reading proper at the ages of fifteen, seventeen, eighteen. The right books are given, but not enough of them. The reading dietary is too meagre for the making of a full man. A score of first-rate books should appear in the school curriculum term by term. The point, however, that I insist upon is that from his sixth year the child should be an "educated child" for his age, should love his lesson-books, and enjoy a terminal examination on the books he has read. Children brought up largely on books compare favourably with those educated on a few books and many lectures; they have generous enthusiasms, keen sympathies, a wide outlook and sound judgment, because they are treated from the first as beings of "large discourse looking before and after." They are persons of leisure too, with time for hobbies, because their work is easily done in the hours of morning school.

It is not necessary to speak of modern languages and mathematics, field work in natural history, handiwork, etc. Schools are pretty much agreed about the treatment of these subjects. As for Latin and Greek, the teaching of these and the possibility of getting in any work beyond these is a crucial question; but I think it is open to Public Schoolmasters to discover that, given boys who have read and thought, and who have maintained the habit of almost perfect attention that a child begins with, the necessary amount of work in the Classics may be done in a much shorter time, and that the mind of the pupil is the more alert because it is engaged in handling various subjects.

Perhaps, too, some enlightened Headmaster may come to distinguish between scholarship and knowledge—a distinction which practical men, like Napoleon, for example, have known how to draw. Probably there never was a life in which the "humanities" exercised a more powerful influence; rarely has there been such an example of the power of the informed mind to conquer the world. Napoleon is the final answer to the contention that a knowledge of books has no practical value, for there was, perhaps, no incident in his career that was not suggested, inspired, illustrated by some historical precedent, some literary apothegm. He was, as we know, no scholar, but he read diligently, even in the midst of absorbing affairs, Homer, the Bible, the Koran, poetry, history, Plutarch.



Nations grow great upon books as truly as do individuals. We know how that heroic young Queen, Louisa of Prussia, perceived that the downfall of her country was not due to Napoleon alone, but also to national ignorance, and that if Prussia were to rise it must be through the study of history. So she set herself to work at the history of modern Europe during that sojourn at Memel, when she knew poverty as a peasant woman knows it. The disciples of Kant founded a league of virtue to arouse Prussian students to the duty of patriotism; Fichte knew how to issue a trumpet call; the nation became a nation of students, and the son of Queen Louisa established the German Empire! The Danes, too, as we all know, owe their rise out of illiteracy to the same Napoleonic impulse. After we had seized their battleships, by way of clipping the claws of Bonaparte, they set to work to make themselves the first farmers in Europe; this they have done in and through their schools and their continuation schools, where they get, not technical instruction, but a pretty wide course in history and literature. To-day, we are watching with curious interest the sane and magnanimous course which the revolution in China is taking; and the Chinese are a literary people. As for the Japanese revolution of some forty years ago, history has little to show of a finer quality; and this, again, was the work of a literary people.

If we would not be left behind by the East and the West we must, as other nations have done, "add to our virtue, knowledge"; and we are still competent, as some of these are not, to mount from the bottom rung of the Apostolic educational ladder. It rests with us to add to our faith, virtue, and to our virtue, knowledge. It is an unheard of thing that the youth of a great nation should grow up without those ideals, slow enough in maturing, which are to be gathered for the most part from wide and wisely directed reading.

## II.

## LETTERS, KNOWLEDGE, AND VIRTUE

TO THE EDITOR OF "THE TIMES"

Sir,—I should thank you for your courtesy if you would allow me to discuss a few points suggested to various correspondents by my letter published in the *Supplement* of February 6. Here is one—I quote the passage without permission because I cannot decipher the name of the writer, who dates from an hotel:—

"There is one thing, however, one note of regret, and that is that one paragraph, that on classical education, was not more expanded. I am satisfied that your central view covers the whole truth; and I am going to give you a small individual experience illustrating this fact—viz., that an early education in the great books of our own language, read, with enjoyment, by children and appropriately given to them from year to year, is the true groundwork of later expansion. Here is the story:—My three daughters were suckled on Walter Scott and Shakespeare. Later, about the ages of from ten to twelve, off their own, they took up Plutarch's Lives, Bunyan, Defoe, and in the same period they refused to learn arithmetic and geography, the former on the ground of its monotony and the latter because, although they loved it, they held that the existing system of teaching geography was 'rotten,' and that geography ought to be learnt by going to the places. I knew better than to remonstrate. I meekly suggested that perhaps they would substitute something else in their curriculum, and they said at once, in an obviously prepared sentence, 'That's just it, we want to learn Latin and harmony.' Now here comes *your* point (in that lamentably abbreviated paragraph):—

'Given boys (or girls) who have read and thought and who have maintained the habit of almost perfect attention that a child begins with, the necessary amount of work in the classics may be done in a much shorter time, and the mind of the pupil is the more alert because it is engaged in handling various subjects.'



Six months later these girls knew more Latin than I learnt in six years under distinguished scholars with very eminent names. They could sling passages from Horace appropriately; they knew the two first Eclogues and half the *Æneid* by heart; they regarded Cicero's Letters to Atticus as a 'penny post' affair, and were quite unduly familiar with the private life of Seneca. But all this did not interfere with their painting or their horsemanship, and better authorities on cricket and the Turf I don't happen to know. That is the illustrative episode. The point, in my mind, is that an early education from great books with the large ideas and the large virtues is the only true foundation of knowledge — the knowledge worth having."

This interesting letter brings us straight to a question which I thought had been pretty fully threshed out; and I tackle it, with diffidence, only because an outsider may see aspects overlooked by experts. The gist of the charges brought against public schools is — Classics take up so much time that there is no opportunity for *Litteræ Humaniores* in any other form. It is easy to say — Gain time by giving up Greek; but, in the first place, public schools, with our old Universities in sequence, are our educational achievement. Other efforts are experimental, but this one thing we know — that men are turned out from this course who are practically unmatched for quality, culture, and power; even the average B.A. shows up better than his compeers, and a degree in arts signifies more than one in any other faculty.

We return thus to my original contention — that letters, primarily, are the content of knowledge; that if Wellington ever said how Waterloo was won, it was not on the playing-fields only, but in the class-rooms of Eton; that Cæsar, Thucydides, *Prometheus Bound*, have won more battles than we know on fields civil and military. A little strong meat goes a long way, and even the average public school boy turns out a capable man. But, alas, if capable, he is also ignorant; he does not know the history and literature of his own country or any other. He has not realized that knowledge is, not a store, but rather a state that a person remains within or drops out of. His degree taken, he shuts his books, reads the newspapers a little, perhaps a magazine or two, but otherwise occupies himself with the interests of sports, games,

shows, or his employment. What is to be done, we wonder vaguely, to secure to this average boy some tincture of knowledge and some taste for knowledge. The expedient of dropping Greek to make room for other things recurs; but on reflection we say, "No"; for culture begins with the knowledge that everything has been known and everything has been perfectly said these two thousand years ago and more. This knowledge, slowly drummed into a youth, should keep him from swelled head, from joining in the "We are the people" cry of the blatant patriot; and there is no better way of knowing a people than to know something of their own words in their own speech.

It is well, by the way, that we should remember that we have as a nation an enormous loss to make good; time was, and not so long ago, when rich and poor were intimately familiar with one of the three great classical literatures. Men's thoughts were coloured, their speech moulded, their conduct more or less governed, by the pastoral idylls called "Genesis," the impassioned poetry of Isaiah, the divine philosophy of John, the rhetoric of Paul — all, writings, like the rest of the Bible, in what Matthew Arnold calls "the grand manner." Here is the well of English undefiled from which men have drawn the best that our literature holds, as well as their philosophy of life, their philosophy of history, and that principal knowledge we are practising to do without — the knowledge of God. And we wonder that the governing classes should forget how to rule as those who serve; and that the working man, brought up on "Readers" in lieu of a great literature, should act with the obstinate recklessness proper to ignorance.

But to return to the main issue. How shall we instruct the ignorance and yet retain the classical culture of the average public school boy? I should like to suggest, again, with diffidence, that he, like his more brilliant compeer, is driven through a mill the outpour of which should be scholarship. Now, scholarship is an exquisite distinction which it would be ill for us as a nation to miss; but if all the men in an assemblage were decorated, who would care to wear an order? Some things are precious for their rarity, and to put a school in the running for this goal is as absurd as the ambition of the little boy who meant to be a Knight of the Garter when he grew up. The thing is not to be done; some men are



born to be scholars, as the shape of their heads testifies. The rest of us take pleasure in their decoration, but are not envious, for scholarship is not the best thing, and does not necessarily imply that vital touch of mind upon mind out of which is got knowledge. As for erudition, we may leave that out of count, it is hardly even an aim at the present time. The geniuses, as one to some thousands, say, of our best, do not trouble themselves much about the regimen we offer — classics or modern languages, or what not; an idle tale, a puppet show, the meanest flower that blows, is enough for them. Anyway, they take care of themselves, and we come back to the average boy.

He must learn his Greek and Latin, but there is an easier way; the girls mentioned in the letter I cite had hit upon it. That favourite girl pupil of Vittorino's who spoke and wrote Greek with "remarkable purity" at twelve, having, so to speak, done with Latin at an earlier age — she, we may be sure, had not been through the grammar school grind. Nor had any of the learned ladies of the Italian and the French Renaissance, the list of whose accomplishments leaves us breathless. While still children, we know how early they married, their knowledge of the classics was copious (and not too wholesome), they knew two or three modern languages, could treat the wounded, nurse the sick, prepare simples, govern great households, ride to chase, yes, and kill too! and do exquisite embroidery. Our own women of the Tudor times appear likewise to have been "infinitely informed" and to have carried their learning gaily; Maria Theresa, by no means a learned lady, could make speeches and converse with her Magyar nobles in Latin, and they could respond, neither knowing the native speech of the other. If these things were true of girls and women, how much more was expected of boys and men!

Are we persons of less intelligence, or how did they do it all? *Every preparatory school knows how.* Perhaps few boys enter public schools who could not pass "Responsions," that is, who are not, as far as Greek goes, ready for Oxford. I once heard a headmaster say:—

"A boy does as much Latin now by the age of twelve as he will ever need for examination purposes, and he spends the next eight years in doing over again and again the same work . . . the pear tree that he climbed at twelve he is

still climbing at twenty! A clever boy of twelve could easily pass Responsions."

A headmaster in Newfoundland mentions in his school report for 1905 a boy who "began Greek in October and passed the Oxford Responsions in January."

There is leakage somewhere, and there is overlapping, and both are due to the examinations upon which scholarships are awarded. Something must be done, because public schools, with all their splendid records, are not effective in the sense that they turn out the average boy a good all-round man. For better or for worse, who knows? the Democracy is coming in like a flood, and our old foundations will be tossed about in the swelter unless we make haste to strengthen our weak places. Might not a commission — consisting of two or three headmasters, as many preparatory school masters, University "Dons," and public men (once public school boys and now the fathers of such boys) — be appointed by consent to look into the question and devise examination tests which shall safeguard Letters, ancient and modern, without putting too high a premium upon scholarship?

Once the hands of schoolmasters were united, they would no doubt devise means by which our friend, the average boy, would get such a knowledge of the classics as should open life-long resources to him. Like the Baron of Bradwardine he would go about with a pocket Livy (as he would say, "Titus Livius,") to be read, not laboured at a few lines at a time: *The Seven of Thebes*, *Iphigenia in Aulis*, the few tragedies left to us by the great dramatists would form part of the familiar background of his thoughts. He would know somewhat of the best that has been written in Greek and Latin, whether through printed translations or through the text itself rendered in the sort of running translation which some masters know how to give. *Pari passu*, he would do his share of gerund-grind, and construe the two or three books of his present limited acquaintance. But his limitations would be recognized, and he would not be required to turn out Greek and Latin verse.

Meantime his master will require him to know pretty intimately a hundred worthy books in addition to the great novels — to be read in class periods, in vacation, and in leisure time — his knowledge of each to be tested by a single bit of



oral description or written work in verse or prose. "Ground he at Grammar," sums up every successful school-boy's record as it did that of the dead "Grammarians"; but the ten or twelve years of school life should yield more than this.

I say nothing now about the teaching of science, for which most schools provide. I may be allowed to consider the subject in a future letter, but should like to add, meantime, that for our generation, science seems to me to be the way of intellectual advance. All the same, the necessity incumbent upon us at the moment is to inculcate a knowledge of *Letters*. Men and their motives, the historical sequence of events, principles for the conduct of life, in fact, practical philosophy, is what the emergencies of the times require us to possess, and to be able to communicate. These things are not to be arrived at by any short cut of economics, eugenics, and the like, but are the gathered harvests of many seasons' sowing of poetry, literature, history. The nation is in sore need of wise men, and these must be made out of educated boys.

## III.

## KNOWLEDGE, REASON, AND REBELLION

TO THE EDITOR OF "THE TIMES"

Sir,—Will you allow me to continue my argument concerning our conception of knowledge?

We have been very busy about education these 60 years or more — diligently digging, pruning, watering; but there is something amiss with our tree of knowledge; its fruits, both good and evil, are of a mean crabbed sort, with so little to choose between them that superior persons find it hard to determine which is which. To examine the individual apples would be a long process, but let me take one at a venture: is it not true that a conviction of irresponsibility characterises our generation?

If this be true, seeing that we all think as we have been brought up to think, our education is at fault. Faulty education is to blame if private property be recklessly injured in broad day, if working men do vital injury to their country thinking to serve their caste, if there be people who love to have it so, as long as their own interests are immune. The melancholy fact is that the people who do damage to private property, to public interests, and to that more delicate asset of a nation, public opinion, are all by way of being educated in their several degrees. All of them can write and speak clearly, think logically if not sincerely, and exhibit certain practical ability.

No doubt we are better and not worse than our forefathers; and, where we err, it is through ignorance. "Through ignorance ye did it," was said of the worst crime that men have done; and that appalling offence was wrought for no worse reason than because it is the habit of more or less lettered ignorance to follow specious arguments to logical conclusions. The sapient East knows all about it. Lady Lugard tells us how, "the Copts have a saying that 'in the beginning when God created things He added to everything its second.' 'I go to Syria,' said Reason; 'I go with you,' said Rebellion." We need not follow the other pairs that



went forth, but still Reason is apt to be accompanied by Rebellion when it sets out in search of a logical issue.

For it is a fatal error to suppose that reason can take the place of knowledge, that reason is infallible; that reasonable conclusions are of necessity right conclusions. Reason is a man's servant, not his master; and behaves like a good and faithful servant — a sort of Caleb Balderstone, ready to lie royally in his master's behoof — and bring logical demonstration of any premiss which the will chooses to entertain. But the will is the man, the will chooses; and the man must *know*, if the will is to make just and discriminating decisions. This is what Shakespeare, as great a philosopher as a poet, set himself to teach us, line upon line, precept upon precept. His Leontes, Othello, Lear, Prospero, Brutus, preach on the one text — that a man's reason brings certain infallible proofs of any notions he has wilfully chosen to take up. There is no escape for us, no short cut; art is long, especially the art of living.

In the days when a working man represented only the unit of his family he picked up enough knowledge to go on with at church and chapel, by scrutinizing his neighbours' doings, in the village parliament held at pump or "public," from the weekly news-sheet. But we have changed all that: bodies of working men have learned by means of union to act with a momentum which may be paralysing or propelling *according to whether the men have or have not knowledge*. Without knowledge, Reason carries a man into the wilderness and Rebellion joins company. The man is not to be blamed: it is a glorious thing to perceive your mind, your reasoning power, acting of its own accord as it were and producing argument after argument in support of any initial notion; how is a man to be persuaded, when he wakes up to this tremendous power he has of involuntary reasoning, that his conclusions are not necessarily right, but rather that he who reasons without knowledge is like a child playing with edged tools? Following his reason, he acquires this and the other sort of freedom; but is it not written:—

"Nor yet  
(Grave this upon thy heart!) if spiritual things  
Be lost through apathy, or scorn, or fear,  
Shalt thou thy humbler franchises support,  
However hardly won or justly dear."

If, then, the manners and the destinies of men are shaped by knowledge, it may be well to inquire further into the nature of that evasive entity. Matthew Arnold helps us by offering a threefold classification which appeals to common sense — knowledge of God, knowledge of man, and knowledge of the natural world; or, as we should say, Divinity, the Humanities, and Science. But I think we may go further and say that Letters, if not (as I said before) the main content of knowledge, constitute anyway the container — the wrought salver, the exquisite vase, even the alabaster box to hold the ointment.

If a man cannot think without words, if he who thinks with words will certainly express his thoughts, what of the monosyllabic habit that is falling upon men of all classes? The chatter of many women and some men does not count, for thought is the last thing it is meant to express. The Greeks believed that a training in the use and power of words was the chief part of education, recognizing that if the thought fathers the word, so does the word in turn father the thought. They concerned themselves with no language, ancient or modern, save their own, but of that they acquired a consummate appreciation. With the words came the great thoughts, expressed in whatever way the emergencies of the State called for — in wise laws, victorious battles, glorious temples, statues, dramas. For great thoughts anticipate great works; and these come only to a people conversant with the great thoughts that have been written and said. In what strength did the youngest and greatest of our Premiers bring about the "revival of England"? He was fortified by illimitable reading, by a present sense of a thousand impossibilities that had been brought to pass — of a thousand things so wisely said that wise action was a necessary outcome. To say that we as a nation are suffering from our contemptuous depreciation of knowledge is to say that we scorn letters, the proper vehicle of *all* knowledge.

Let us glance at the three departments of knowledge to see in regard to which of the three we are most in error. Some of us are content with such knowledge of Divinity as is to be picked up from the weekly sermon heard in church, but even with the qualification of a degree in arts I wonder do our divines lift us as much as they might into that serener region where words fitly spoken beget thoughts of peace and



holy purpose? That worship is the main end of our Church services is a sublime ideal, but "The Way, without which there is no going, the Truth, without which there is no knowing, the Life, without which there is no living," must needs be set before us in "words that burn," and we wait for preachers like those of a bygone day, "Whose pulpit thunders shook a nation's soul."

It is possible that the Church may err in keeping us underfed upon that knowledge which is life, but she does not send us away empty. We get some little share, too, of literature, poetry, history: a phrase, a line, lights up a day for us; to read of Charles Fox's having said, "Poetry's everything," of that black conqueror in the Soudan who said, "Without learning life would have neither pleasure nor savour"—these things do us good, we cannot tell why.

But there is a region of apparent sterility in our intellectual life. Science says of literature, "I'll none of it," and science is the preoccupation of our age. Whatever we study must be divested to the bone, and the principle of life goes with the flesh we strip away: history expires in the process, poetry cannot come to birth, religion faints; we sit down to the dry bones of science and say, Here is knowledge, all the knowledge there is to know. "I think that is very wonderful," a little girl wrote in an examination paper after trying to explain why a leaf is green. That little girl had found the principle—admiration, wonder—which makes science vital, and without wonder her highest value is, not spiritual, but utilitarian. A man might as well collect matchboxes, like those charming people in one of Anatole France's novels, as search for diatoma, unless the wonder of the world be ever fresh before his eyes. In the eighteenth century science was alive, quick with emotion, and therefore it found expression in literature. Still, a Lister, a Pasteur, moves us, and we feel that in one department of science, anyway, men stirred by the passion of humanity ("letters" at the fountain head?) are doing monumental work.

But for the most part science as she is taught leaves us cold; the utility of scientific discoveries does not appeal to the best that is in us, though it makes a pretty urgent and general appeal to our lower avidities. But the fault is not in science—that mode of revelation which is granted to our generation, may we reverently say?—but in our presentation of

it by means of facts and figures and demonstrations that mean no more to the general audience than the point demonstrated, never showing the wonder and magnificent reach of the law unfolded. The old Hebrew who taught us that "Bread-corn is bruised . . . because his God doth instruct him and doth teach him," glorified life. Coleridge has revealed the innermost secret, whether of science or literature: speaking of the genesis of an idea, he says, "When the idea of Nature (presented to chosen minds by a Higher Power than Nature herself)," etc. The man who would write for us about the true inwardness of wireless telegraphy, say, how truly it was a discovery, a revealing of that which was there and had been there all along, might make our hearts burn within us. No doubt there are many scientific men who are also men of letters, and some scientific books as inspiring as great poems—but science is waiting for its literature; and, though we cannot live in shameful ignorance and must get what we can out of the sources open to us, science as it is too commonly taught tends to leave us crude in thought and hard and narrow in judgment.

By way of a *pis aller*, would it not be a step in advance to require a degree in Arts from every student who offers himself for one in Science? An additional year of university life, with the whole period divided equally between the two studies, might secure, at any rate, some amelioration, some widening of outlook for young men who are preparing for scientific pursuits.

We are told that in times of great upheaval it profits not to cast blame on this or that section of the community; that we are all to blame even for the offences of individuals; and we partly believe it because our fathers have told us; thus did the prophets humble themselves before God, and bemoaned each his exceeding great sin in the sin of his people. We, too, are meek under chastisements, but we are vague and, to that extent, insincere. Perhaps our duty is to give serious thought to the problems of our national life; then we may come to realize that man does not live by bread alone; we may perceive that "bread" (or cake!) is our sole and final offer to all persons of all classes; that we are losing our sense of any values excepting money values; that our young men no longer see visions, and are attracted to a career in proportion as "there's money in it." Nothing can come out of



nothing, and, if we bring up the children of the nation on sordid hopes and low ambitions, need we be surprised that every man plays for his own hand?

We recognize now and then, when the shoe pinches, that the nation is in the throes of a revolution, but do we take trouble to find out the cause of "industrial unrest" and the correct attitude of the public towards that unrest? The revolution which is in progress may, it seems to me, develop on either of two lines: the men may get those "humbler franchises" they covet, but at the loss of "spiritual things" — such as the character for fair play, straight dealing, and loyalty to contract, which we like to think of as distinctively English. But what about the warning that these "humbler franchises" — *minimum* wage, schedule rates, and the rest — will be likewise lost? Trade unionism is no new thing; centuries ago and for centuries, as we know, England and Europe were under the dominion of those states within the State — the Trades Guilds. At this distance of time we can afford to admire these for the spiritual things to which they held fast; their religious organization, the thorough training they afforded to their apprentices, and the obligations every member of a guild was under to use just weights and measures and to turn out first rate work of whatever kind. But, notwithstanding these moral safeguards, the tyranny of the guilds became insupportable, and they disappeared into the limbo of things no longer serviceable. Could any dream of Socialism, again, offer more perfect conditions than did the Russian village communes? But these too established a tyranny which was felt to be more oppressive than serfdom itself: the *Mir* disappeared, lost in that Gehenna which engulfed the guilds.

Wordsworth's prophetic lines should instruct us. "However hardly won or justly dear" those humbler franchises for which men are standing out in their tens of thousands with unanimity, courage, devotion to a cause justified by their REASON, they will not be able to support those same franchises if spiritual things, the real things of life, be lost in gaining them. Therefore we may predict that the present movement may well issue in worse things but will not issue in the triumph of either trade unionism or syndicalism.

Here is our opportunity. We blame the workmen for their irresponsible action, for what seems to us the reckless

way in which the poorest are impoverished and multitudes of workers are compelled to unwilling idleness. But those of us who are neither miners nor owners may not allow ourselves irresponsible thought or speech, and we may contribute our quota towards appeasement. It is within everybody's province to influence public opinion, if it be only the opinion of two or three; we may raise the whole question to a higher plane, the plane of those spiritual things — duty, responsibility, brotherly love (towards all men) — which make the final appeal. We could not, and we need not try to, obstruct the revolution of which we are vaguely conscious, but we may help to make it a turn of the wheel which shall bring us out of the darkness of a Simplon Tunnel into the light and glory of a Lombard plain. We may, respecting the claims of working men, perceive that they demand too little, and that the things they demand are not those which matter. Even the shock of a revolution is not too high a price for an experience which should convince us that knowledge is the basis of a nation's strength.



IV.

THE NEW AND OLD CONCEPTIONS OF  
KNOWLEDGE

TO THE EDITOR OF "THE TIMES"

Sir,—Will you allow me to take up my parable again, not as one who sits in the seats of the learned, but rather as that unduly privileged person, the looker-on? True, discrimination is required for the performance of even his lowly and casual function, but what the writer may lack in this respect the reader will supply.

I have ventured to advance that "knowledge" is undefined and probably indefinable; that, it is a state out of which persons may pass and into which they may return, but never a store upon which they may draw; that knowledge-hunger is as universal as bread-hunger; that our best provision for conveying knowledge is marvellously successful with the best men, but rather futile with the second best; that persons whose education has not enriched them with knowledge store up information (statistics and other facts), upon which they use their reasoning powers; that the attempt to reason without knowledge is disastrous; and that, during the present distress, England is, for various economical reasons, in a condition of intellectual inanition consequent upon a failure in her food supply, in this case the supply of food proper for the mind. I have glanced at Knowledge under the three headings suggested by one who speaks with authority, and have contended that, even if knowledge be divisible, the vehicle by which it is carried is one and indivisible, and that it is generally impossible for the mind to receive knowledge except through the channel of letters.

But the mediæval mind had, as we know, a more satisfactory conception of knowledge than we have arrived at. Knowledge is for us a thing of shreds and patches, knowledge of this and of that, with yawning gaps between. The Hebrew had a more august conception; I shall venture to quote further from a typical passage to which I referred in my last letter:—

"Doth the ploughman plow all day to sow? Doth he open and break the clods of his ground? When he hath made plain the face thereof, doth he not cast abroad the fitches, and scatter the cummin, and cast in the principal wheat and the appointed barley and the rie in their place? For his God doth instruct him to discretion and doth teach him."

The scholastic mediæval mind, probably working on the scattered hints which the Scriptures offer, worked out a sublime *Filosofica della Religione Cattolica*, pictured, for example, in the great fresco painted by Simoni Memmi and Taddeo Gaddi (which Ruskin has taught us to know), and implied in "The Adoration of the Lamb" painted by the two Van Eycks. In the first picture we get a Pentecostal Descent, first, upon the cardinal virtues and the Christian graces, then, upon prophets and apostles, and below these, upon the seven Liberal Arts, represented each by its captain figure, Cicero, Aristotle, Zoroaster, etc., none of them Christian, not one of them a Hebrew. Here we get the magnificent idea that all knowledge (undebased) comes from above and is conveyed to minds which are, as Coleridge says, previously prepared to receive it; and, further, that it comes to a mind so prepared, without question as to whether it be the mind of pagan or Christian; a truly liberal catholic idea, it seems to me, corresponding marvellously with the facts of life. As sublime and even more explicit is the Promethean fable which informed the Greek mind. With the sense of a sudden plunge we come down to our own random and ineffectual notions, and are tempted to cry with Wordsworth—

"Great God! I'd rather be  
A Pagan suckled in a creed outworn,"

and know that a God had brought gifts of knowledge to men at awful cost, than to sit serene in the vague belief that knowledge arrives in incoherent particles, no one knows how and no one knows whence; or that it is self-generated in a man here and there who gets out of himself new insight into the motions of mind and heart, a new perception of the laws of life, the hint of a new amelioration in the condition of men.

Because the notion that we entertain of knowledge as being heterogeneous lies at the root of our heterogeneous theories of education, it may be as well to quote a passage



from Ruskin's description of that picture in the chapel of the Church of Santa Maria Novella to which I have referred:—

" . . . . On this side and the opposite side of the Chapel are represented by Simon Memmi's hand, the teaching power of the Spirit of God and the saving power of the Christ of God in the world according to the understanding of Florence in his time.

"We will take the side of intellect first. Beneath the pouring forth of the Holy Spirit in the point of the arch beneath are the three Evangelical Virtues. Without these, says Florence, you can have no science. Without Love, Faith, and Hope — no intelligence. Under these are the four Cardinal Virtues. . . . Temperance, Prudence, Justice, Fortitude. Under these are the great Prophets and Apostles. . . . Under the line of Prophets, as powers summoned by their voices are the mythic figures of the seven theological or spiritual and the seven geological or natural sciences; and under the feet of each of them the figure of its Captain-teacher to the world." (*Mornings in Florence.*)

That is, the Florentines of the Middle Ages believed in "the teaching power of the Spirit of God," believed not only that the seven Liberal Arts were fully under the direct outpouring of the Holy Ghost, but that every fruitful idea, every original conception, be it in geometry, or grammar, or music, was directly derived from a Divine source.

Whether we receive it or not, and the Scriptures abundantly support such a theory regarding the occurrence of knowledge, we cannot fail to perceive that here we have a harmonious and ennobling scheme of education and philosophy. It is a pity that the exigencies of his immediate work prevented Ruskin from inquiring further into the origin, the final source, of knowledge, but we may continue the inquiry for ourselves. In "the teaching power of the Spirit of God" we have a pregnant and inspiring phrase. Supposing that we accept this mediæval philosophy tentatively for present relief, what would be our gains?

First, the enormous relief afforded by a sense of unity of purpose, of progressive evolution, in the education of the race. It induces great ease of mind to think that knowledge is dealt out to us according to our preparedness and according to our needs; that God whispers in the ear of the man who is ready in order that he may be the vehicle to carry the new know-

ledge to the rest of us. "God has a few of us whom He whispers in the ear": Abt Vogler is made to say, and another poet causes his Explorer to cry:—

"God chose me for his whisper, and I've found it, and its yours!"

Next, that knowledge, in this light, is no longer sacred and secular, great and trivial, practical and theoretical. All knowledge, dealt out to us in such portions as we are ready for, is sacred; knowledge is, perhaps, a beautiful whole, a great unity, embracing God and man and the universe, but having many parts which are not comparable with one another in the sense of less or more, because all are necessary and each has its functions. Next, we perceive that knowledge and the mind of man are to each other as are air and the lungs. The mind lives by means of knowledge; stagnates, faints, perishes, deprived of this necessary atmosphere.

That, it is not for a man to choose, "I will learn this or that, the rest is not my concern"; still less is it for parent or schoolmaster to limit a child to less than he can get at of the whole field of knowledge; for, in the domain of mind at least as much as in that of morals or religion, man is under a Divine Master; he has to know as he has to eat.

That, there is not one period of life, our school days, in which we sit down to regular meals of intellectual diet, but that we must eat every day in order to live every day.

That, knowledge and what is known as "learning" are not to be confounded; learning may still be an available store when it is not knowledge; but by knowledge one grows, becomes more of a person, and that is all that there is to show for it. We sometimes wonder at the simplicity and modesty of persons whose knowledge is matter of repute; but they are not hiding their light; they are not aware of any unusual possessions; they have nothing to show but themselves, but we feel the force of their personalities. Now, forceful personalities, persons of weight and integrity, of decision and sound judgment, are what the country is most in need of; and, if we propose to bring such persons up for the public service, the gradual inception of knowledge is one condition amongst others.



## SOME MODERN REMEDIES

There are various delightfully "new" educational systems in favour, in all of which a grain of knowledge is presented in a gallon of warm diluent. *Punch's* "Miss Honeyman" is a case in point; but, even if Jemmy and Jenny had known which was Alfred and which was the cakes, the "dramatic method," good as affording an occasional game, is a huge waste of time when serious work is required. Again, we have the theory that it does not matter what a child learns, but only how he learns it; which is as sound as, It does not matter what a child eats, but only how he eats it, therefore feed him on sawdust! Then, we have Rousseau's primitive-man theory, that a child must get all his knowledge through his own senses and by his own wits, as if there were no knowledge waiting to be passed on by the small torch-bearer; and there is the theory which obtained in Catholic England, exemplified in more than one of the Waverley Novels, in the sports purveyed for her tenantry by Lady Margaret Bellen-den, for example. Those men and maidens had been trained as children to be "supple, active, healthy, with senses alert, ready for dance and song, with an eye and ear ready for the beautiful, intelligent, happy, capable." (I quote from a recent valuable letter in *The Times*.) What with our morris-dances, pageants, living pictures, miracle plays, and so on, we are reviving the Stuart educational ideals, and no doubt we do well to aim at increasing the general joy. But our age requires more of us; in the sort of self-activity and self-expression implied in these and in half a dozen other educational theories, knowledge plays no part, and the city *gamin* exhibits in perfection every quality of gaiety, alert intelligence, delight in shows, which we set ourselves to cultivate.

"With all thy getting, get understanding," is the message for our needs, and understanding is, in one sense, the conscious act of the mind in apprehending knowledge, which is in fact relative, and does not exist for any person until that person's mind acts upon the intellectual matter presented to it. "Why will ye not understand?" is the repeated and poignant question of the Gospels.

That is what ails us as a nation, we do not understand; not working people only, but educated men and women,

employ fallacious arguments, offer prejudices for principles, and platitudes for ideas. If it be argued that these failures are due less to ignorance than to insincerity, I should reply that insincerity is an outcome of ignorance; the darkened intelligence cannot see clearly.

A review in *The Times Literary Supplement* (for April 11) comes to my aid:—"The note of modern Germany Lord Haldane finds in the fact that, while its spirit is highly concrete and practical, it is based on foundations of abstract knowledge;" "orderliness" (says Lord Haldane), "becomes easy when first principles are clearly defined." Mr. Herford again, in the volume under review (*Germany in the Nineteenth Century*) speaks of "the peculiarly important part played by abstract thought in the making of modern Germany." We English have an uneasy admiration for Germany as a nation which has worked out its own salvation on certain philosophic principles; it would be fatal and futile for us to take what the Irishman calls the "bottle" prescribed for a neighbour. Our constitution is not his nor are our ailments identical; but we also must look for our panacea to abstract knowledge; the difference may happily prove to be that we shall investigate further into the source of knowledge and apply the remedy with a more adequate conception of first principles. "The day is unto them that know," but knowledge is by no means the facile acquirement of those who, according to Ruskin, "cram to pass and not to know"; and who "do pass and do not know."

I would not be understood as venturing to pass strictures upon the vast and excellent educational work we are doing; it is impossible to go into an elementary school without being impressed by the competence of the teachers and the intelligence of the children; I have already paid a worthless tribute to public schools, and should like here to add a word of affectionate and hearty appreciation of the high school girl as I know her — a person quite undeserving of the slings and arrows of outrageous criticism too freely aimed at her. As for our new universities, they remove the stigma under which many of us have suffered in presence of the numerous centres of intellectual life which add dignity and grace to continental cities. The new universities are full of promise for the land.

We have, no doubt, arrived at a good starting place, but



we may not consider that the journey is accomplished. I need not repeat the charges to which we have laid ourselves open because of our ignorance, but perhaps in future letters I may be allowed to take a closer survey of the field of education as regarded from the standpoint of knowledge and the innate affinities existing in the mind with that knowledge which is proper for it. For the present my desire is that "abstract knowledge" should present itself to practical persons as the crying demand of the nation; the "mandate," let us say, pronounced by certain general failures to understand the science of relations, and that other neglected form of knowledge, "the science of the proportion of things."

## V.

## EDUCATION AND THE FULNESS OF LIFE

TO THE EDITOR OF "THE TIMES"

Sir,—It is curious how the news of the day is apt to throw light upon any question under investigation. "I must live my life!" said the notorious bandit who has lately terrorized Paris; and we have heard the sort of cant often, even before *The Doll's House* gave to "self-expression" the dignity of a cult; nevertheless, Bonnot has done an ill turn to society, for a misguiding theory neatly put is more dangerous than an ill-example.

We are tired of the man who claims to live his life at the general expense, of the girl who will live hers to her family's annoyance or distress; but there really is a great opportunity open to the nation which will set itself to consider what the life of a man should be and will give each individual a chance to live his life.

We are doing something; we are trying to open the book of Nature to children by the proper key—knowledge, acquaintance by look and name, if not more, with bird and flower and tree; we see, too, that the magic of poetry makes knowledge vital, and children and grown-ups add a tag of verse which shall add blackness to the ashbud, tender wonder to that "flower in the crannied wall," a thrill to the song of the lark. As for the numerous field clubs of the northern towns, the members of which, weavers, miners, artisans, reveal themselves as accomplished botanists, birdmen, geologists, their Saturday rambles mean not only "life," but splendid joy. It is to be hoped that the opportunities afforded in the schools will prepare women to take more part in these excursions; at present the work done is too thorough for their endurance and for their slight attainments,

In another direction we are doing well; we are so made that every dynamic relation, be it leap-frog or high-flying, which we establish with Mother Earth, is a cause of joy; we begin to see this and are encouraging swimming, dancing,



hockey, and so on, all instruments of present joy and permanent health. Again, we know that the human hand is a wonderful and exquisite instrument to be used in a hundred movements exacting delicacy, direction and force; every such movement is a cause of joy as it leads to the pleasure of execution and the triumph of success. We begin to understand this and make some efforts to train the young in the deft handling of tools and the practice of handicrafts. Some day, perhaps, we shall see apprenticeship to trades revived, and good and beautiful work enforced. In so far, we are laying ourselves out to secure that each shall "live his life"; and that, not at his neighbour's expense; because, so wonderful is the economy of the world that when a man really lives his life he benefits his neighbour as well as himself; we all thrive in the well-being of each. We are perceiving, too, that a human being is endowed with an ear attuned to harmony and melody, with a voice from which music may issue, hands whose delicate action may draw forth sounds in enthralling sequence. With the ancient Greeks, we begin to realize that music is a necessary part of education. So, too, of pictorial art; at last we understand that every one can draw, and that, because to draw is delightful, every one should be taught how; that every one delights in pictures, and that education is concerned to teach him what pictures to delight in.

A person may sing and dance, enjoy music and natural beauty, sketch what he sees, have satisfaction in his own good craftsmanship, labour with his hands at honest work, perceiving that work is better than wages; may live his life in various directions, the more the merrier. A certain pleasant play of the intellect attends the doing of all these things; his mind is agreeably exercised; he thinks upon what he is doing, often with excitement, sometimes with enthusiasm. He says, "I must live my life," and he lives it in as many of these ways as are open to him; no other life is impoverished to supply his fulness, but, on the contrary, the sum of general joy in well-being is increased both through sympathy and by imitation,

This is the sort of ideal that is obtaining in our schools and in the public mind, so that the next generation bid fair to be provided with many ways of living their lives, ways which do not encroach upon the lives of others. Here is the contribu-

tion of our generation to the science of education, and it is not an unworthy one; we perceive that a person is to be brought up in the first place for his own uses, and after that for the uses of society; but, as a matter of fact, the person who "lives his life" most completely is also of most service to others because he contains within him provision for many serviceable activities which are employed in living his life; and, besides, there is a negative advantage to the community in the fact that the man is able to live on his own resources,

But a man is not made up only of eyes to see, a heart to enjoy, limbs delightful in the using, hands satisfied with perfect execution; life in all these kinds is open more or less to all but the idly depraved. But what of man's eager, hungry, restless, insatiable mind? True, we teach him the mechanical art of reading while he is at school, but we do not teach him to read; he has little power of attention, a poor vocabulary, little habit of conceiving any life but his own; to add to the gate-money at a football match is his notion of adventure and diversion.

We are, in fact, only taking count of the purlieus of that vast domain which pertains to every man in right of his human nature. We neglect mind. We need not consider brain; a duly nourished and duly exercised mind takes care of its physical organ provided that organ also receives its proper material nourishment. But our fault, our exceeding great fault, is that we keep our own minds and the minds of our children shamefully underfed. The mind is a spiritual octopus, reaching out limbs in every direction to draw in enormous rations of that which under the action of the mind itself becomes knowledge. Nothing can stale its infinite variety; the heavens and the earth, the past, the present, and future, things great and things minute, nations and men, the universe, all are within the scope of the human intelligence. But there would appear to be, as we have seen, an unsuspected unwritten law concerning the nature of the "material" which is converted into knowledge during the act of apprehension. The idea of the *Logos* did not come by chance to the later Greeks; "The Word" is not a meaningless title applied to the second Person of the Trinity; it is not without significance that every utterance which fell from Him is marked by exquisite literary fitness for the occasion;



in rendering an account of His august commission Christ said:—"I have given unto them the words which thou gavest me"; and one disciple voiced the rest when he said, "Thou hast the words of eternal life." The Greeks knew better than we that words are more than things, more than events; with all primitive peoples rhetoric appears to have been a power; the grand old sayings which we have scorned as inventions are coming to their own again, because, what modern is capable of such inventions? Men move the world, but the motives which move men are conveyed by words. The boy who leaves school without a vocabulary, who knows few adjectives, few verbs, and is as to nouns in the condition of the excellent "Mrs. Musgrove," who, when told, "We do not call Bermuda and Bahama, you know, the West Indies," made no comment, because, "she could not accuse herself of having ever called them anything in the whole course of her life." Now, a person is limited by the number of things he is able to call by their names, qualify by appropriate epithets; this is no mere pedantic ruling, it belongs to that unfathomable mystery we call human nature; and the modern notion of education, with its shibboleth of "things not words," is intrinsically demoralizing. The human intelligence demands letters, literature, with a more than bread-hunger. It is within living memory how the American negroes fell upon books as the famished Israelites fell upon the deserted camp of Sennacherib. Only as he has been and is nourished upon books is a man able to "live his life." A great deal of mechanical labour is necessarily performed in solitude; the miner, the farm labourer, cannot think all the time of the block he is hewing, the furrow he is ploughing; how good that he should be figuring to himself the trial scene in the *Heart of Midlothian*, the "high-jinks" in *Guy Mannering*, that his imagination should be playing with Ann Page or Mrs. Quickly, or that his labour goes the better "because, his secret soul a holy strain repeats." People, working people, do these things. Many a one can say out of a rich experience, "My mind to me a kingdom is"; many a one cries with Browning's "Paracelsus," "God! Thou art mind! Unto the master-mind, Mind should be precious. Spare my mind alone!" We know how "*Have mynde*" appears on the tiles paving the choir of St. Cross; but "*mynde*," like body, must have its meat.

Faith has grown feeble in these days, hope faints in our heavy ways, but charity waxes strong; we would make all men millionaires if we could, or, at any rate, take from the millionaires to give to the multitude. No doubt some beneficent and venturesome Robin Hood of a minister will arise (has arisen?) to take steps in that direction; but when all has been done in the way of social amelioration we shall not have enabled men to "live their lives" unless we have given them a literary education of such sort that they choose to continue in the pleasant places of the mind. "That is all very well in theory," some one objects, "but look at the masses, are they able to receive letters? When they talk it is in journalese, and anything in the nature of a book must be watered down and padded to suit their comprehension." But is it not true that working men talk in "journalese" because it is only the newspapers that do them the grace to meet them frankly on their own level? Neither school education nor life has put books in their way, and their adoption of the only literary speech that offers only proves a natural aptitude for letters. One cannot always avoid appeal to the authority one knows to be final, and I will not apologize for citing the fact, for no doubt we have all wondered that Christ should expose the profoundest philosophy to the multitude, the "Many," whom even Socrates contemns.

May I quote, with apologies to the writer, a letter signed "A Working Man," written in answer to one of mine which was honoured by being reprinted in *The Times Weekly Edition*? (It is good, by the way, that such a journal should be in the hands of working men). My correspondent "thanks Heaven that there are still a few persons left in this country who regard education as somewhat different from a means of *keeping a shop*." We may all thank Heaven that there are working men who value knowledge for its own sake and hate to have it presented to them as a means of getting on.

The fact is, letters make a universal appeal because they respond to certain innate affinities: young Tennysons, De Quinceys, and the like, are, as we all know, inordinate readers, but these are capable of foraging on their own account; it is for the average, the dull, and the backward boy I would lay urgent claim to a literary education; the minds of such as these respond to this and to no other appeal, and



they turn out perfectly intelligent persons, open to knowledge by many avenues. For working men whose intelligence is in excess of their education, letters are the accessible vehicle of knowledge; having learned the elements of reading, writing, and summing, it is unnecessary to trouble them with any other "elements"; their natural intelligence and mature minds make them capable of dealing with difficulties as they occur; and for further elucidation every working men's club should have an encyclopædia. Some men naturally take to learning, and will struggle manfully with their Latin grammar and Cicero, their Euclid and trigonometry. Happy they! But the general conclusion remains, that for men and women of all ages, all classes, and all complexions of mind, letters are an imperative and daily requirement to satisfy that universal mind-hunger, the neglect of which gives rise to emotional disturbances, and, as a consequence, to evils that dismay us.

## VI. (CONCLUSION)

### KNOWLEDGE IN LITERARY FORM

TO THE EDITOR OF "THE TIMES"

Sir,—I have ventured to urge that knowledge is necessary to men, and that, in the initial stages, it must be conveyed through a literary medium, whether it be knowledge of physics or of letters, because there would seem to be some inherent quality in mind which prepares it to respond to this form of appeal and no other. I say in the initial stages, because, possibly, when the mind becomes conversant with knowledge of a given type, it unconsciously translates the driest formulæ into living speech; perhaps it is for some such reason that mathematics seem to fall outside this rule of literary presentation; mathematics, like music, is a speech in itself, a speech irrefragably logical, of exquisite clarity, meeting the requirements of mind.

To consider letters as the staple of education is no new thing; nor is the suggestion new that to turn a young person into a library is to educate him. But here we are brought to a stand; the mind demands method, orderly presentation, as inevitably as it demands knowledge; and it may be that our educational misadventures are due to the fact that we have allowed ourselves to take up any haphazard ordering that is recommended with sufficient pertinacity.

But no one can live without a philosophy which points out the order, means, and end of effort, intellectual or other; to fail in discovering this is to fall into melancholia, or more active madness: so we go about picking up a maxim here, a motto there, an idea elsewhere, and make a patchwork of the whole which we call our principles; beggarly fragments enough we piece together to cover our nakedness and a hundred phrases which one may hear any day betray lives founded upon an ignoble philosophy. No doubt people are better than their words, better than their own thoughts; we speak of ourselves as "finite beings," but is there any limit to the generosity and nobility of almost any person? The hastily spoken "It is the rule at sea," that distressed us a



little while ago, what a vista does it disclose of chivalric tenderness, entire self-sacrifice! Human nature has not failed; what has failed us is philosophy, and that applied philosophy which is called education. Philosophy, all the philosophies, old and new, land us on the horns of a dilemma; either we do well by ourselves and seek our own perfection of nature or condition, or we do well by others to our own loss or deterioration. If there is a mean, philosophy does not declare it.

There are things of which we have desperate need: we want a new scale of values: I suppose we all felt when we read how several millionaires went down in the Titanic disaster, not only that their millions did not matter, but that they did not matter to them; that possibly they felt themselves well quit of an incessant fatigue. We want more life: there is not life enough for our living; we have no great engrossing interests; we hasten from one engagement to another and glance furtively at the clock to see how time, life, is getting on; we triumph if a week seems to have passed quickly; who knows but that the approach of an inevitable end might find us glad to get it all over? We want hope: we busy ourselves excitedly about some object of desire, but the pleasure we get is in effort, not in attainment; and we read of the number of suicides among French schoolboys, for instance, with secret understanding; what is there to live for? We want to be governed: servants like to receive their "orders"; soldiers and schoolboys enjoy discipline; there is satisfaction in stringent Court etiquette; the fact of being "under orders" adds dignity to character. When we revolt it is only that we may transfer our allegiance. We want a new start: we are sick of ourselves and of knowing in advance how we shall behave and how we shall feel on all occasions; the change we half-unconsciously desire is to other aims, other ways of looking at things. We feel that we are more than there is room for; other conditions might give us room; we don't know; any way, we are uneasy. These are two or three of the secret matters that oppress us, and we are in need of a philosophy which shall deal with such things of the spirit. We believe we should be able to rise to its demands, however exigent, for the failure is not in us or in human nature so much as in our limited knowledge of conditions.

The cry of decadance is dispiriting, but is it well-founded? The beautiful little gowns that have come down as heirlooms would not fit the "divinely tall" daughters of many a house where they are treasured. We have become frank, truthful, kind; our conscientiousness and our charity are morbid; we cannot rest in our beds for a disproportionate anxiety for the well-being of everybody; we even exceed the generous hazard, that, peradventure for a good man one might be found to die; almost any man will risk his life for the perishing without question of good or bad; and we expect no less from firemen, doctors, lifeboatmen, parsons, the general public.

An annoying inquiry held lately almost resulted in a ruling that no one should let himself be saved so long as others were in danger; it is preposterous, but is what human nature expects of itself. No, we are not decadent on the whole, and our uneasiness is perhaps caused by growing pains. We may be poor things, but we are ready to break forth into singing should the chance open to us of a full life of passionate devotion. Now, all our exigent demands are met by words written in a Book, and by the manifestations of a Person; and we are waiting for a Christianity such as the world has not yet known. Hitherto, Christ has existed for our uses; but what if a time were coming when we, also, should taste the "orientall fragrancie" of, "My Master!" So it shall be when the shout of a King is among us, and are there not premonitions? But these things come not by prayer and fasting, by good works and self-denial, alone; there is something prior to all these upon which our Master insists with distressful urgency—"Why will ye not know? Why will ye not understand?"

My excuse for touching in a letter to a newspaper upon our most intimate concerns is that this matter, too, belongs to the domain of letters; if we propose to seek knowledge we must proceed in an orderly way, recognizing that the principal knowledge is of most importance; the writer writes and the editor inserts and the reader reads, because we are all moved by the spirit of our time; these things are our secret pre-occupation, for we have come out of a long alienation as persons "wearied with trifles," and are ready and anxious for a new age. We know the way, and we know where to find our rule of the road; but we must bring a new zeal and a



new method to our studies; we may no longer dip here and there or read a perfunctory chapter with a view to find some word of counsel or comfort for our use. We are engaged in the study of, in noting the development of, that consummate philosophy which meets every occasion of our lives, all demands of the intellect, every uneasiness of the soul.

The arrogance which pronounces judgment upon the written "Word" upon so slight an acquaintance as would hardly enable us to cover a sheet or two of paper with sayings of the Master, which confines the Divine teaching to the great Sermon, of which we are able to rehearse some half-dozen sentences, is as absurd as it is blameworthy. Let us give at least as profound attention to the teaching of Christ as the disciples of Plato, say, gave to his words of wisdom. Let us observe, notebook in hand, the orderly and progressive sequence, the penetrating quality, the irresistible appeal, the unique content of the Divine teaching; (for this purpose it might be well to use some one of the approximately chronological arrangements of the Gospel History in the words of the text). Let us read, not for our profiting, though that will come, but for love of that knowledge which is better than thousands of gold and silver. By and by we perceive that this knowledge is the chief thing in life; the meaning of Christ's saying, "Behold, I make all things new," dawns upon us; we get new ideas as to the relative worth of things; new vigour, new joy, new hope are ours.

If we believe that knowledge is the principal thing, that knowledge is tri-partite, and that the fundamental knowledge is the knowledge of God, we shall bring up our children as students of Divinity and shall pursue our own life-long studies in the same school. Then we shall find that the weekly sermons for which we are prepared are as bread to the hungry; and we shall perhaps understand how enormous is the demand we make upon the clergy for living, original thought. It is only as we are initiated that science and "Nature" come to our aid in this chief pursuit; then, they "their great Original proclaim"; but while we are ignorant of the principal knowledge they remain dumb. Literature and history have always great matters to speak or suggest, because they deal with states or phases of moral government and moral anarchy, and tacitly indicate to us the sole key to all this unintelligible world; and literature not only reveals

to us the deepest things of the human spirit, but it is profitable also "for example of life and instruction in manners."

We are at the parting of the ways; our latest educational authority, one who knows to love little children, would away with all tales and histories that appeal to the imagination; let children learn by means of things, is her mandate; and the charm and tenderness with which it is delivered may well blind us to its desolating character. We recognize Rousseau, of course, and his *Emile*, that self-sufficient person who should know nothing of the past, should see no visions, allow no authority. But human nature in children is stronger than the eighteenth century philosopher and the theories which he continues to inform. Whoever has told a fairy tale to a child has been made aware of that natural appetency for letters to which it is our business to minister. Are we not able to believe that words are more than meat, and, so believing, shall we not rise up and insist that children shall have a liberal diet of the spirit? Rousseau, in spite of false analogies, fallacious arguments, was able to summon fashionable mothers and men of the world throughout Europe to the great task of education, because his eloquence convinced them that this was their assigned work and a work capable of achievement; and we who perhaps see with clearer eyes should do well to cherish this legacy—the conviction that the education of the succeeding generation is the chief business of every age.

Nevertheless, though we are ourselves emerging from the slough of materialism, we are willing to plunge children into its heavy ways through the agency of a "practical" and "useful" education; but children have their rights, and chief among these is the freedom of the city of mind. Let them use things, know things, learn through things, by all means; but the more they know letters the better they will be able, with due instruction, to handle things. I do not hesitate to say that the whole of a child's instruction should be conveyed through the best literary medium available. His history books should be written with the lucidity, concentration, personal conviction, directness, and admirable simplicity which characterizes a work of literary calibre. So should his geography books; the so-called scientific method of teaching geography now in vogue is calculated to place a child in a somewhat priggish relation to Mother Earth; it is



impossible, too, that the human intelligence should assimilate the sentences one meets with in many books for children, but the memory retains them and the child is put in the false attitude of one who offers pseudo-knowledge. Most of the geography books, for example, require to be translated into terms of literature before they can be apprehended. Great confidence is placed in diagrammatic and pictorial representation, and it is true that children enjoy diagrams and understand them as they enjoy and understand puzzles; but there is apt to be in their minds a great gulf between the diagram and the fact it illustrates. We trust much to pictures, lantern slides, cinematograph displays; but without labour there is no profit, and probably the pictures which remain with us are those which we have first conceived through the medium of words; pictures may help us to correct our notions, but the imagination does not work upon a visual presentation; we lay the phrases of a description on our palette and make our own pictures; (works of art belong to another category). We recollect how Dr. Arnold was uneasy until he got details enough to form a mental picture of a place new to him. So it is with children and all persons of original mind: a map to put the place in position, and then, all about it, is what we want.

Readings in literature, whether of prose or poetry, should generally illustrate the historical period studied; but selections should be avoided; children should read the whole book or the whole poem to which they are introduced. Here we are confronted by a serious difficulty. Plato, we know, determined that the poets in his "Republic" should be well looked after lest they should write matter to corrupt the morals of youth; aware of what happened in Europe when the flood-gates of knowledge were opened, Erasmus was anxiously solicitous on this score. Will the publishers, who, since Friedrich Perthes discovered their educational mission, have done so much for the world, help us in this matter also? They must excise with a most sparing hand, always under the guidance of a jealous scholar; but what an ease of conscience it would be to teachers if they could throw open the world of books to their scholars without fear of the mental and moral smudge left by a single prurient passage! Many, too, who have taken out their freedom in the republic of letters would be well content to keep complete library

editions in costly bindings in their proper places, while handy volumes in daily use might be left about without uneasiness.

The Old Testament itself after such a (very guarded) process would be more available for the reading of children; and few persons would feel that Shakespeare's plays suffered from the removal of obscenities here and there. In this regard we cherish a too superstitious piety. In another matter, let that great "remedial thinker" Dr. Arnold, advise us:—"Adjust your proposed amount of reading to your time and inclination; but whether that amount be large or small let it be varied in its kind and widely varied. If I have a confident opinion on any one point connected with the improvement of the human mind it is on this." Here we get the reason for a varied and liberal curriculum; and, as a matter of fact, we find that the pupil who studies a number of subjects knows them as well as he who studies a few knows those few.

In closing a series of letters, for the insertion of which I am greatly indebted to the courtesy of the Editor, may I venture to repeat a few suggestions offered in former letters? Children should read books, not about books and about authors; this sort of reading may be left for the spare hours of the dilettante. Their reading should be carefully ordered, for the most part in historical sequence; they should read to *know*, whether it be "Robinson Crusoe" or Huxley's "Physiography"; their knowledge should be tested, not by questions, but by the oral (and occasionally the written) reproduction of a passage after one reading; all further processes that we concern ourselves about in teaching the mind performs for itself; and, lastly, this sort of reading should be the chief business in the class room.

We are at a crucial moment in the history of English education. John Bull is ruminating. He says, "I have laboured at the higher education of women; let them back to the cooking-pot and distaff and learn the science (!) of domestic economy. I have tried for these forty years to educate the children of the people. What is the result? Strikes and swelled head! Let them have 'prentice schools and learn what will be their business in life!" John Bull is wrong. In so far as we have failed it is that we have offered the pedantry, the mere verbiage, of knowledge in lieu of knowledge itself; and it is time for all who do not hold



knowledge in contempt to be up and doing ; there is time yet to save England and to make of her a greater nation, more worthy of her opportunities. But the country of our love will not stand still ; if we let the people sink into the mire of a material education our doom is sealed ; eyes now living will see us take even a third-rate place among the nations, for it is knowledge that exalteth a nation, because out of duly-ordered knowledge proceedeth righteousness and prosperity ensueth.

"Think clear, feel deep, bear fruit well," says our once familiar mentor, Matthew Arnold, and his monition exactly meets our needs.

CHARLOTTE MASON.

*Ambleside.*

## SUPPLEMENTARY LETTER

### MISS MASON ON THE MONTESSORI SYSTEM

TO THE EDITOR OF "THE TIMES"

Sir,—May I remind your readers of a curious educational experiment which was tried some hundreds of years ago in the city of Kranconopolis? An inquiring citizen had been greatly struck by the performances of a man who, having lost both his arms in childhood, had made up for the absence of fingers by making use of his toes. This man, being something of an artist, painted pictures, and also wrote, knitted, carved with his toes, and his work, of whatever kind, was better than that of most persons with hands.

Our observer perceived in this circumstance the educational principle that Nature invariably hastens to make good a deficiency by increased and compensating activity in some other organ. He reasoned thus:—

"Progress in any art is the result of concentrated attention ; children with hands do not get on with their writing because it is easy to write with the hand and they do not attend. Suppose we teach them to write with their toes : that is much more difficult and more novel ; their attention will be secured and their progress should be admirable."

This idea caught on : the Kranconopolites, who loved to hear of some new thing, hastened to his support, and several Toewriting schools were established. Children of from two to six were the best scholars because their muscles were flexible ; also, they were interested in their toes, and the carefully graduated exercises, with bodkins, toothpicks, skewers, entertained them greatly. It was necessary, of course, to tie their hands behind them because otherwise the children would use their fingers ; but with this precaution the progress made was so remarkable that many people went to see, and Toewriting schools were established in several neighbouring States. The children learned to read and to write at the same time because their observant and carefully trained



teachers found that they were less restless when engaged in the effort of learning to read; but no distractions, song or tale or the like, which did not advance Toewriting, directly or indirectly, were admitted.

The children's progress was, as I have said, remarkable; they were fully a year in advance of other children when they went to ordinary schools; nor was this all. The gentle attentions they received from many visitors gave them a pleasing easy carriage; moreover, the toes when used as instruments required some care, the children were accustomed to walk delicately, and acquired dignity of movement. In fact, Toewriting was held to be one of the important scientific discoveries of that age, and the schools easily outrivalled the hitherto popular "Tasting Schools." People said, Tasting nice things is a sort of bribery after all, isn't it?

May I clear myself from any suspicion of writing flippantly of a serious and noble endeavour? The discriminating article on "The Montessori Method," in *The Times Educational Supplement* of November 6 encourages me in an attempt to divest the principles involved in this interesting method from meretricious adjuncts, such as the pleasing deportment and personal cleanliness of the children. Given, a pleasant room adapted to their comfort, and friendly visitors who give respectful consideration to their doings, and children will behave with ease and frankness; if the school be desirable to children and parents and cleanliness be made a condition of admission they will be clean. America has long known how to make free American citizens out of the motley crowds of little aliens who present themselves at her school doors, and her methods are practically identical with those of Dr. Montessori; the delightful spontaneousness of those Italian children is evidenced in every English nursery and cottage home as well as in our holiday schools; and certainly, no child under six should go to school unless with full freedom to run or squat or lie face downwards if the mood seize him.

Several years ago I wrote to an educational journal about the possibility of roof schools to be used (except in bad weather) for quite young children, and it still seems to me that long hours in the open with twice as much time given to play as to work is what children require. In Germany, as we know, six is the school age, and the child has the proud knowledge that he has made a step in life and has entered

upon an eight years' course; but the little children at home sometimes get in the mother's way and are packed off to some small dame school known as a kindergarten. Perhaps the flat roof of the big school would be a better expedient.

But—

"Me this uncharted freedom tires,  
I feel the weight of chance desires,"

is as true for young children as for the poet, and for the rest of us. We must have the ease of habit, the discipline of habit, to save us from the labour of many decisions in an hour as to "which foot comes after which!" To make a cult of liberty in our schools would be to bring up a race of vagabonds. As for a long school diet of geometrical forms and coloured tablets, Dickens has told us all about it in his tragic picture of the young Gradgrinds at school, a passage we should do well to learn by heart.\*

But it is not the pretty manners of the children nor the freedom under compulsion which mark the Montessori schools that attracts educationalists everywhere, so that we hear of 70 such schools established in Switzerland alone. We all endeavour ourselves to secure these ends, and we owe gratitude to Dr. Montessori for showing us a way. But let us be honest; these children can read and write by the time they are four or five, while with us eight is the usual (and desirable) age at which these accomplishments are mastered. We run away with the fallacy that reading and writing are education, not as they truly are, mechanical arts, no more educative than the mastery of shorthand or the Morse Code, and we think we see the way to add two or three years to the child's school life by getting this primary labour over at an early age. But here is no new thing.† We are told that young boys in a Russian Ghetto learn Hebrew very quickly, because there is nothing else to learn. This is the secret that all trainers of animals, acrobats, musical prodigies are aware of; secure concentration by shutting off all other pursuits and interests, and you can get young children to do almost anything; their minds will work of necessity, and it is possible to direct their work into one channel. A child of five may read Greek,

\* Omitted from *The Times* letter for want of space.

† Cf. Professor Vambéry's early life and *The Land of Promise*, by Mary Antin.



compose sonatas, or read and write, if you secure that his efforts are directed into one channel.

Leaving out the pretty manners, the personal neatness, and the rapid progress of the children in the fundamental arts of reading and writing, because these are pretty generally attained by similar means — the friendly notice of cultivated people, moral suasion, and concentration on a single end — what principles are left for our imitation? I fail to discover a principle, but only a practice — that of learning the contours of letters and other forms by touch instead of by sight. It is hard to see why the less accurate and active of the two senses should be used by preference; and the blindfolded children feeling for form remind one of the famous verdict —

“Whenever Nose puts his spectacles on,

By daylight or candlelight, Eyes should be shut.”

The reader tries “touching” the handiest objects which offer an outline, his own mouth or nostril for example, and after much patient touching he produces no resemblance at all unless as he is betrayed into one by memory. But possibly if he were to “touch” given objects for so many minutes each time, day after day and month after month, he might at last be able to draw a mouth or write an “m.” At first the act of touching is tiresome, but it becomes soothing and a rather sensuous state is set up; one is a little hypnotized, and the photographs of both Italian and American children in the act of touching seem to show that a hypnotic state has been induced.

We know that hypnotic suggestion is used in some Continental schools to further the work of education; and here, conceivably, we get the key to the sudden attainment of the art of writing so delightful to read of. But this way danger lies; the too facile child becomes the facile man whose will power has become weakened, whose brain exhausted, until he is little capable of self-direction. The very fact of inducing in eager and active children the habit of continuous “touching” would seem to indicate that undue influence has been exerted, whether through the mere act of touching or through the agency of an external will.

It is claimed that “the relief of the eye by continuing and developing the sense of touch” is a valuable educational asset; but it is well to inquire first whether the definite practice of this sense is safe. The blind man learns to read

by touch, and if this “method” is to be carried into schools for older children we shall all need books for the blind; but the blind man’s will is not practised upon, because his strong purpose goes with his “touching” effort and nullifies any hypnotic effect of the act. We cannot put children or ourselves into his condition, and why should we? The eye is strengthened by light and natural use and enfeebled by darkness and inertia.

The Montessori method is one effort among many made in the interests of “scientific pedagogy.” “I don’t believe there’s no such a (thing).” Would Betsy Prig say it? Would she be right if she did? I think so, although every advance we make is towards Scientific Pedagogy. What we are saying is, practically, “Develop his senses, and a child is educated; train hand and eye and he can earn his living; what more do you want?” But a child so trained is not on a level with the Red Indian of our childhood; his senses are by no means so acute, and the Red Indian grew up with song and dance, tale and legend, and early developed a philosophy, even a religion.

The Montessori child has no such chances; he sharpens a single sense, to be sure, at the expense of another and higher sense, but there is no gradual painting in of a background to his life; no fairies play about him, no heroes stir his soul; God and good angels form no part of his thoughts; the child and the person he will become are a scientific product, the result of much touching and some seeing and hearing; for what has science to do with those intangible, hardly imaginable entities called ideas? No, let him take hold of life, match form with form, colour with colour; but song and picture, hymn and story are for the educational scrapheap.

We are all very grateful to the gracious Italian lady who has shown that courtesy and consideration reveal the dignity and grace that belong to all children, that the rights of children include the right of freedom in self-education, and that every human being is precious and worthy of honour, especially while he is a child. But I am inclined to think that all our indebtedness falls under these three heads, and that the elaborate and costly apparatus, the use of touch rather than sight and the exclusive sensory development are mischievous errors.

The contention goes deep. Is man a material being whose brain secretes thought as his liver secretes bile, or is Brother



Body the material and spiritually informed organ of a non-material being, of whom it has been said:—

“Darkness may bound his Eyes, not his Imagination. In his Bed he may ly, like Pompey and his Sons, in all quarters of the Earth, may speculate the Universe, and enjoy the whole World in the Hermitage of himself”?

The person who educates a child must act upon one or other of these premisses; there is no middle way, and there is no detail so trifling but it must be ordered according to one or other of these fundamental principles. The one is the method of scientific, the other that of humane, pedagogy. The cultivation of the organs of sense and of muscular activity belongs to both, but the *rationale* is in each case different. To take a single example, the scientific pedagogue (awful designation!) lets a child sort multitudes of tablets into colours and shades of colour, with a dim faith that perhaps his brain will be occupied in secreting delectable thoughts about various and beautiful coloured objects. The humane teacher, who has his own psychology, knows that the child with tablets is mentally paving the school-room, the street, the town, the whole world, with little squares of colour. Therefore, if he decide to teach at all what children learn incidentally, he gives a child leaves and flowers, beads, patches of silk and velvet, things carrying associations and capable of begetting ideas; and the child does not pave streets, but does “a stately pleasure dome decree,” where are “gardens bright with sinuous rills and sunny spots of greenery.” The humanist knows that the immediate lesson is a fragment of material which a child uses to aid him in speculating the universe, and that therefore a lesson is profitable only as it lends itself to thought and to imagination. An artist entrusted with the woodcarving and sculpture in a great building complained to me that he could not find men with any initiative to work under him. “How shall I do this?” “Do it as you like.” But no way that he likes presents itself to the man. He has been brought up on a mental diet void of ideas.

A great danger threatens the country and the world. We are losing faith in ideas, and substituting practices for principles. As I have said in former letters to the *Times*, the note of popular education to-day is contempt for knowledge and for the books in which the knowledge of mankind is lodged. “Education by things” is boldly advocated, re-

gardless of the principle that things lead only to more and more various things and are without effect on the thoughts and therefore on the character and conduct of a man, save as regards the production or the examination of similar things. A boy may turn out accurate and workmanlike models in cardboard or carpentry; if he is a neat and careful boy to begin with, these qualities help him in his work; but if he have learned against the grain to turn out good work, the acquired characters will influence only the particular work in question. Handicrafts add to the joy of living, perhaps to the means of living, but they are not educative in the sense that they influence character. Therefore a child should not do handwork (like the ordering of cubes and cylinders in sizes, or tablets in colours, for example) that is not either beautiful or of use. Because a child is a person, because his education should make him more of a person, because he increases upon such ideas as are to be found in books, pictures, and the like, because the more of a person he is the better work will he turn out of whatever kind, because there is a general dearth of persons of fine character and sound judgment, for these and other reasons I should regard the spread of schools conducted on any method which contemns knowledge in favour of appliances and employments as a calamity, no matter how prettily the children may for the present behave. Knowledge is the sole lever by which character is elevated, the sole diet upon which mind is sustained.

I am, Sir, yours obediently,

CHARLOTTE M. MASON.

*Ambleside.*